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AUTHOR Donohue, Peggy J.
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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the relationship of adolescent work status to personal values associated with work, social skills, and academic performance. The Work Values Inventory and the Basic Living Skills Pupil Record Form were administered to 165 eleventh and twelfth grade students. These students were subsequently classified as being naturally occurring workers, vocational education workers, job seekers, or nonseekers. Multiple discriminant function analyses revealed that the vocational education worker seems to be more motivated by intrinsic rather than extrinsic work values in comparison to the naturally occurring worker. The finding that naturally occurring workers are more similar to nonworkers on certain psychosocial variables and academic performance suggested that certain differences between workers and nonworkers may be due to factors related to selection into the workplace and not to effects of the adolescent work experience. (Author/YLB)

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Adolescents Who Work: Effects on Work Values, Achievement, and Basic Living Skills

Peggy J. Donohue

Texas Woman's University

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ABSTRACT

In light of the magnitude of participation in the labor force by high school students, the present study investigated the relationship of adolescent work status to personal values associated with work, social skills, and academic performance. One hundred sixty-five 11th and 12th grade students were administered the Work Values Inventory and the Basic Living Skills Pupil Record Form and subsequently classified as being naturally occurring workers, vocational education workers, job seekers, or nonseekers. Multiple discriminant function analyses revealed that the vocational education worker seems to be more motivated by intrinsic rather than extrinsic work values in comparison to the naturally occurring worker. The finding that naturally occurring workers are more similar to nonworkers on certain psychosocial variables and academic performance suggests that certain differences between workers and nonworkers may be due to factors related to selection into the work place and not to effects of the adolescent work experience.

The increased participation of in-school youth in the part-time labor force following the rapid growth of the retail and service sectors of the economy since World War II has been well documented. Between 1970 and 1979, the proportion of 16- and 17-year-old students who were employed increased from 39% to 46% for males and from 34% to 44% for females (Young, 1980), and approximately half of the 16-year-olds in the labor force work more than 14 hours a week (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1980). The actual number of high school students who have any paid work experience before graduating, however, is probably much higher than even these statistics indicate, since many teenagers may move in and out of the labor market frequently.

Consistent with the trend toward youth employment, many schools have adopted policies which facilitate student employment through more flexible schedules, early release from school, academic credit for job experience, and placement services.

This increase in emphasis on part-time employment of high school students brings into question the effects such employment may have on the education and socialization of adolescents in American society. Clearly, the large amount of the adolescents's time spent on the job suggests that in addition to the home, peer, and school environments, the job setting has emerged as a potential important influence on adolescent development (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1981).

There is some controversy regarding the devlopmental effects of such employment (see reviews by Greenberger and Steinberg, 1981; Hamilton and Crouter, 1980; Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, and McAuliffe, 1982). Results of studies by ad hoc panels pertaining to the effects of early work experience on adolescent development have generally been supportive of adolescent employment. For example, presumed benefits of such employment for the adolescent include opportunities to acquire early workplace socialization in the form of learning job-related attitudes, skills, and habits, experiences in taking responsibility for their own actions, and opportunities to gain knowledge of career possibilities (President's Science Advisory Committee, 1973; Work-Education Consortium, 1978). It is apparent, however, that the various job settings commonly utilizing adolescent employees are not equal in the extent to which these benefits occur (Greenberger, Steinberg, and Ruggiero, 1982). Moreover, early work may have distinct disadvantages. Behn, Carnoy, Carter, Crain, and Lewin (1974) have argued that rather than the workplace being an opportunity for job-related growth, the work setting may be accurately characterized as being unfulfilling, boring, and dehumanizing. Early work experience also contradicts the view of adolescence as a moratorium from adult responsibilities, and "the expansion of work demands into the lifestyle of adolescence and youth could limit individual development and, in the long run, hinder societal adaptation to changing circumstances" (Hamilton and Crouter, 1980, p. 328).

The most extensive recent investigation of the effects of early work involvement has been that of Ellen Greenberger and Laurence Steinberg (e.g., Greenberger and Steinberg, 1981; 1982; Steinberg and Greenberger, 1980). In their study, the working students were 212 10th and 11th graders who were first-time employed and not working in association with a career education program. Through questionnaires, personal interviews and direct observations of job performance, these workers were compared with nonworking students of the same age. In several recent reports, Greenberger and Steinberg conclude that the workplace as currently designed has little positive influence on adolescent socialization and that working, especially working long hours, may interfere with performance in school.

The workers in the Greenberger and Steinberg study were "naturally occurring" workers, i.e., those students working in jobs obtained solely by their own efforts. The purpose of the study reported here was to compare both naturally occurring workers and workers involved in career education programs with nonworkers on measures of personal values associated with work, social skills and school performance. In addition to the naturally occurring workers and vocational education workers, the nonworkers were divided into two groups, those seeking employment and those not seeking employment.

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 86 11th and 79 12th grade students enrolled in a large suburban school. Of these 165 volunteers, there were 81 males and 84 females, and all participants were taking a full course load.

Eighty-four percent of the participants were of Anglo-American background and 64% of the subjects' fathers and 54% of the mothers were employed in white collar or professional functions. After graduation from high school, 70% of the students planned to attend college, and 64% reported living with both natural parents.

IQ's of subjects ranged from 73 to 140 ($\bar{X}$ = 106; SD = 33.5) on the Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test given during their sophomore year. Class rank ranged from four to 410 out of a junior class of 419 students and a senior class of 453 students. Thirty-two percent of the students ranked in the first quartile of their class, 27% in the second quartile; 29% in the third quartile, and 12% in the 4th quartile; the mean GPA for the 165 students was 2.89 on a four-point system (SD = .84). The mean absences from school for the subjects was 3.6 days (SD = 2.5).

On the basis of self reports, students who reported regular employment of at least three hours weekly for non-family members were classified as "workers." There were 105 such workers, and they worked a mean of 23 hours per week (SD = 9.5).

Seventeen percent of the students who worked were employed in a fast food service; 13% were in retail sales/cashier work; 9% in manual labor; in grocery work (stocker, sacker, checker); 7% in clerical work; 4% in operative/skilled jobs; and 5% reported other types of work. The workers were subsequently classified as those students who worked part time in naturally occurring jobs without any vocational education instruction or as those students who worked part time and were currently enrolled in a vocational educational program. Sixty-four students were "naturally occurring" workers and 41 were "vocational education" workers.

The 36% of the participants who were classified as being "nonworkers" were asked if they were currently seeking employment. Responses to this question resulted in 33 of the nonworkers being classified as "job seekers" and 27 as "nonseekers."

Instruments

The Work Values Inventory (WVI) was administered to measure the relative strength of fifteen values related to work activity (Super, 1970). The WVI consists of a list of 45 self-descriptive values which people consider important in their work, and is used to assess the goals which motivate workers. It was designed to measure the values which are "extrinsic to" as well as those which are "intrinsic in" work, i.e., the satisfactions which are sought in work and the satisfactions which may be the concomitants or outcomes of work. The work values are

divided into 15 categories which include the intrinsic values of altruism, esthetics, creativity, intellectual stimulation, independence, achievement, prestige, management, and variety. More extrinsic values include economic returns, security, associates, supervisory relations, surroundings, and way of life. Respondents are asked to rate the extent of importance that each statement has to himself or herself by means of a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 ("unimportant") to 5 ("very important"). Each item had a possible value from 1 to 5 and the total of the values assigned to the three item for each of the 15 scales yields a raw score as high as 15 or as low as three. Individual raw scores are summed to determine a total score.

The Basic Living Skills Pupil Record Form (BLS) is a 50-item scale designed to assess general statements about self-concept, interpersonal relations, responsibility, decision-making, study skills, citizenship, and career planning (Percival, 1980). Responses to the 50 statements are obtained using a 6-point scale, ranging from "never like me" to "exactly like me." A subject's BLS total score is obtained by summing his or her 50-item scores.

Procedure

All 870 members of the 11th and 12th grades of the high school were asked to participate. One hundred sixty-five of these students returned parental consent forms authorizing the testing of their children and the procurement of academic

information from the student's school files.

Testing was accomplished by having the students report to a large resource room at the school during the third period class time. In addition to the WVI and the BLS, a questionnaire was administered to obtain information about the participants' family background and current employment. School records were consulted to determine high school grade point average, Otis-Lennon intelligence scores, and rank/quartile information of the students' class standing. GPA's were available for all 165 students. IQ scores were available for 124 of the subjects. Rank and quartile information was available for 99% of the participants.

Results

The means, standard deviations, and results of univariate analyses of variance for the WVI, BLS, and school performance variables are presented in Table 1 for the four work status categories. To compare the work values of workers and nonworkers, these two groups were contrasted by a simple discriminant function analysis using the 15 WVI variables as

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Insert Table 1 about here

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predictors. A significant discriminant fuction, $\chi^2(7) = 16.5$, $p = .02$, resulted in centroids of .25 for the workers and -.43 for the nonworkers. Interpreting the standardized

discriminant function coefficients (in parentheses) of the variables that entered the discriminant function, it is evident that workers were higher on Achievement (.42), Supervisor Relations (.61), Independence (.47), and Variety (.47) than nonworkers but lower on Surrounding (-.35), Way of Life (-.43), and particularly Economic Returns (-.76). A further analysis using the WVI variables to discriminate among the four work status categories produced two significant discriminant functions. In the first, $\chi^2(21) = 46.07$, $p = .001$, the centroids for the naturally occurring workers, vocational education workers, job seekers, and nonseekers were -.14, .60, .01, -.60, respectively. Thus, this analysis most clearly discriminated between the vocational education worker and nonseeker groups and showed that vocational education workers were higher than other groups on Management (.46), Variety (.45), Esthetics (.28), Altruism (.22), and Security (.22), but, most importantly, lower on Economic Returns (-1.06) and Creativity (-.48). The second function, $\chi^2(12) = 22.3$, $p = .034$, produced the most separation of the job seekers and nonseekers as revealed by the centroids of .09, -.26, .51, and -.43 for the groups in the order mentioned above. Jobseekers were higher than the other groups, especially the nonseekers, on Esthetics (.83), Economic Returns (.65), and Altruism (.58) but lower on Security (-.73) and Management (-.54).

The means and standard deviations for the total and subscale scores of the BLS are presented for the four work status categories in Table 1. Comparison of the workers and nonworkers on the subscales of the BLS did not result in a significant discriminant function, $\chi^2(2) = 4.34$, $p = .114$. Using the four work status categories instead of just workers and nonworkers resulted in two significant predictive equations, however. In the first, $\chi^2(15) = 31.42$, $p = .008$, centroids of -.08, -.22, .62, and -.24 occurred for the naturally occurring workers, the vocational education workers, job seekers, and nonseekers, respectively. This analysis indicated that job seekers were isolated from the other three groups and were higher on the basic living skills of Career Planning (.70), Citizenship (.55), and Study Skills (.55) but lower on Self Concept (-1.11) and Decision Making (-.16). As reflected by centroids of .16, -.46, -.05, and .37 for the groups as listed above, the second function using the BLS subscales as predictors of the work status categories ($\chi^2(8) = 15.48$, $p = .05$) discriminated most between the vocational education workers and the nonseekers and revealed that vocational education workers were higher on Decision Making (-1.86) but lower on Study Skills (1.32) and Self Concept (.68) than the other groups.

The means and standard deviations for the school-performance

variables of GPA, absences, and intelligence are presented in Table 1. Comparison of the workers and nonworkers on the school-performance variables resulted in a significant function, $\chi^2(1) = 3.27$, $p = .05$, and revealed centroids of .23 for nonworkers and -.12 for the workers. The analysis showed that nonworkers scored higher than workers on intelligence scores (1.00). An examination of the differences among the four work status groups on GPA, absences, and intelligence also produced a significant discriminant function. The function, $\chi^2(6) = 25.80$, $p = .0002$, produced centroids for naturally occurring workers, vocational education workers, job seekers, and nonseekers of .25, -.87, -.05, .45, respectively; the nonseekers were higher on GPA (.74) and on intelligence (.39) than other groups, in particular, the vocational education workers. Although absences did not contribute enough unique variance to enter this last function, it is apparent from Table 1 that the naturally occurring workers and nonseekers had significantly fewer absences than the other two groups, with the vocational education group having the highest number of absences.

Discussion

The contrast of the four work status categories by the multiple discriminant function analyses produced five significant discriminant functions. On both the significant functions using the WVI scale as predictors, on both functions using the BLS as predictors, and on the function using the school performance variables as predictors, the nonseeker group was an extreme group. On three of these functions, the first involving the WVI, the second involving the BLS, and the one involving school performance variables, the centroid of the nonseekers was most different from that of the vocational education workers, and on the other two functions, the nonseekers were maximally separated from the job seekers. In none of the functions, therefore, did the naturally occurring workers occupy an extreme position.

A commonly held view seems to be that extrinsic factors are more important than intrinsic ones in the adolescent's motivation to work. Behn et al. (1974) contend that working represents only a means to earn wages and that the workplace is merely an oppressive environment for obtaining money to satisfy a compulsive consumption pattern, and Johnson (1980) reported that students work for spending money, but not to acquire skills. The results of the present analyses suggest that this view may more accurately divide the naturally occurring workers than the vocational education workers. In the first function involving the WVI,

the variable contributing most to group separation was Economic Returns and the vocational education workers valued this factor less than the other three groups. In addition, four of the five variables the vocational education workers were highest on were intrinsic variables.

Considerable separation between the two worker categories also occurred on the second function involving the BLS variables. The vocational education group was higher on decision making but lower on study skills and self concept than the naturally occurring workers. Furthermore, as indicated by the last discriminant function analysis, the vocational education workers were lower on all the school performance variables.

Since on each analysis, the centroid of the naturally occurring workers was closer to the centroid of the nonseekers than it was to the other extreme, the naturally occurring workers are consistently more similar to the nonseekers than they are to other groups. The similarity of these two groups is especially evident on the school performance variables.

Greenberger and Steinberg (1980) found that their workers (naturally occurring) had lower GPA's and higher numbers of absences than their nonworkers. Since within their nonworker group, the nonseekers and job seekers did not differ on these variables, Greenberger and Steinberg concluded that working led to the drop in school performance

and not that poor school performance led to self-selection into the workplace. In the present set of data, the naturally occurring workers and the nonseekers had similar GPA's and absences, but the vocational education workers and job seekers did not differ on these variables and were lower on GPA and higher on absences than the other two groups. The present findings, therefore, do not support Greenberger and Steinberg's conclusion that working negatively affects school performance, although the reasons for the discrepancy in findings concerning the naturally occurring workers in the two studies are not apparent at this time.

In conclusion, it is clear from this study that adolescents in the various work status categories can readily be discriminated on a variety of personal-social and performance variables. Work status thus seems to be an important explanatory variable for the high school student. Adolescent workers, furthermore, are not a homogenous group; differences on a variety of dimensions occur between naturally occurring and vocational educational workers.

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Table 1

Univariate comparison of the four work-status groups on the Work Values Inventory, Basic Living Skills and school performance variables

	Work Values Inventory									
	Naworker (n = 64)		Vocedworker (n = 41)		Job Seeker (n = 33)		Nonseeker (n = 27)			
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	p
Creativity	12.0	2.4	11.1	2.3	11.1	.24	11.0	2.5	1.60	.19
Management	10.1	2.4	12.3	2.0	9.8	2.3	9.6	2.0	.66	.58
Achievement	13.5	1.7	13.1	2.2	13.2	1.7	12.6	1.8	1.80	.15
Surroundings	12.4	2.0	12.1	2.4	12.6	1.6	12.3	1.5	.46	.71
Sup. Relations	13.1	2.2	13.0	2.0	12.6	2.0	12.9	1.4	.29	.83
Way of Life	13.6	2.4	13.1	2.1	13.6	1.4	13.9	1.2	.85	.47
Security	12.8	2.3	12.6	2.3	12.4	2.4	12.9	1.8	.35	.79
Associates	11.3	2.3	11.3	2.2	11.5	2.2	11.4	1.6	.05	.98
Esthetics	9.9[b]	2.6	9.7[a,b]	2.6	10.2[a]	2.7	8.2	3.3	3.39	.02
Prestige	12.1	2.2	12.2	2.2	11.9	2.0	11.8	2.0	.18	.91
Independence	12.2	1.9	11.7	2.1	11.5	2.1	11.5	2.2	1.30	.28
Variety	12.1	2.2	11.8	2.3	11.4	2.2	11.0	2.8	1.60	.19
Eco. Returns	13.2[b]	2.2	12.0	2.3	12.9[a,b]	2.3	13.4[a]	1.4	3.53	.02
Altruism	12.6	2.2	12.7	2.5	13.1	1.7	11.8	2.1	1.94	.13
Intel. Stim.	11.6	2.3	11.3	2.1	11.3	1.8	11.3	1.8	.19	.90

Table 1 (continued)

Basic Living Skills

	Naworker (n = 64)		Vocedworker (n = 41)		Job Seeker (n = 33)		Nonseeker (n = 27)			
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	p
Self Concept	48.4	7.1	47.3	5.7	46.3	7.2	48.4	5.8	.88	.45
Inter. Relat.	45.6	8.2	44.9	6.7	45.0	8.0	46.2	6.8	.20	.90
Respons.	44.8	8.2	43.8	6.1	45.4	8.5	45.0	6.8	.29	.83
Decis. Making	44.2	7.5	44.9	6.3	45.5	8.2	43.1	8.0	.60	.62
Study Skills	43.8	7.7	42.0	7.8	45.7	9.1	43.5	7.7	1.31	.27
Citizenship	50.4	6.6	49.3	6.5	51.2	6.6	51.2	5.5	.70	.55
Career Plan.	48.0	6.2	47.3	6.5	49.7	5.5	46.1	6.8	1.81	.15
Grand Total	325.3	42.5	319.1	33.2	328.8	44.1	323.5	37.3	.39	.76
School Performance Variables										
GPA	3.18[a]	.68	2.35[b]	.82	2.74[b]	.88	3.20[a]	.75	11.63	.001
Absences	2.72[a]	2.83	5.07[b]	3.74	4.39[b]	4.29	2.74[a]	3.54	4.86	.003
Intelligence	67.82[a]	19.84	49.54[b]	28.77	65.70[a,b]	22.59	74.14[a]	19.48	5.67	.001

a,b All means with the same letter superscript are not significantly different according to the Tukey's HSD test, $p < .05$.